

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Favorable reconsideration of this application, as presently amended and in light of the following discussion, is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-12 are pending in the present application and Claims 1 and 4 are amended by the present response. Support for amendments to the claims can be found in the specification and claims as originally filed. Thus, no new matter is added.

In the outstanding Office Action, Claim 2 was objected to as redundant; Claim 1 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, as indefinite; Claims 1-7 and 12 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as anticipated by Loose et al. (U.S. Pat. No. 6,517,433); and Claims 8-11 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as unpatentable over Loose in view of Tsuji et al. (Japanese Publication No. 2000-011725, herein "Tsuji").

With respect to the objection of Claim 2 as being redundant, Applicants respectfully traverse this objection. The outstanding Action states that the "first area" having an opening area where the symbols displayed by the variable display unit are to be seen appears to be equivalent to the portion of independent Claim 1 that recites "the front side display unit having a first area for enabling viewing of the symbols displayed by the variable display unit."

However, Applicants respectfully submits that the "first area" recited in independent Claim 1 is not always equivalent to the "opening area" recited in dependent Claim 2. For example, in the case where the front side display unit is a transparent liquid crystal display, the front side display unit can display no images on the first area without having an opening area so that both the symbols displayed by the variable display unit and the images are clearly displayed. In other words, in various embodiments, the "first area" recited in Claim 1 could be a transparent material or no material so long as the symbols displayed by the variable

display unit can be viewed through the first area. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request that the objection to Claim 2 be withdrawn.

With respect to the rejection of Claim 1 under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, as indefinite, Applicants have amended Claim 1 to recite “wherein the front side displaying unit does not display any images on the first area.” This amendment is consistent with the interpretation noted on page 3 of the outstanding Action. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request that the rejection of Claim 1 under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, be withdrawn.

Before turning to the outstanding prior art rejections, it is believed that a brief review of the present invention would be helpful.

In this regard, the present invention describes a gaming apparatus that includes a variable display unit configured to variable display a plurality of symbols and a front side display unit having a first area for enabling viewing of the symbols displayed by the variable display unit and a second area, which surrounds the first area, for enabling the display of images thereon.

Turning now to the §102(e) rejection in the outstanding Office Action, Applicants respectfully traverse the §102(e) rejection based on Loose for the following reasons.

Specifically, regarding the rejection of independent Claim 1 and 4, Loose fails to describe or suggest that *the front side displaying unit does not display any images on the first area, the first area being for enabling viewing of the symbols displayed by the variable display unit.*

Loose describes a video display that displays images on a first area for enabling viewing of symbols displayed by the reels 12a-12c. More specifically, when a player using the system of Loose presses the “Pay Table” key on the button panel 23, the video image 18

depicts "Pay Table" in response to the command by the player. At this time, as shown in Figure 5, a part of the "Pay Table" *is displayed on the first area*.¹

Further, when one or more reels 12a-12c displays a bonus symbol or a bonus symbol combination along an active pay line, the central processing unit shifts operation from the basic slot game to the bonus game. In the bonus game, the video image 18 depicts selectable elements 28 and requires a player to select one or more selectable elements 28 to earn bonuses. When this occurs, as shown in Figure 7, a portion of the group of selectable elements *is displayed on the first area*.²

In addition, the video image 18 randomly depicts an animation in which the video indicator 29 is moved from a periphery of the display area 16 to one or more symbols displayed by one or more reels 12a-12c. The video indicator 29 identifies one or more symbols displayed by one or more reels 12a-12c as a special symbol. When this occurs, as is shown in Figure 9b, a part of the video indicator 29 *is displayed on the first area*.³

As is noted above, Claims 1 and 4 recite that the front side displaying unit *does not display any images* on the first area. Therefore since the front side displaying unit of the claimed invention does not display any images on the first area for enabling viewing of symbols displayed by the variable display unit, both symbols displayed by the variable display unit and the images for entertainment can be clearly displayed.⁴ In contrast, the system of Loose does not provide this advantage as Loose does not describe or suggest a specific portion of a transmissive panel in which image are not displayed overtop of so that both the symbols displayed on the reels and images displayed overtop can be clearly displayed.

¹ Loose, col. 3, lines 56-61 and Fig. 5.

² Loose, col. 4, lines 28-49 and Figure 7.

³ Loose, col. 5, lines 2-10 and Figure 9b.

⁴ See page 12, lines 15-18 of the present disclosure.

In addition, regarding the rejection of Claim 12, Loose does not describe or suggest that the front side display unit includes a LCD panel, which *has an opening area for enabling viewing of symbols displayed by the variable display unit.*

Accordingly, in light of the above discussion, Applicants respectfully submit that Claims 1, 4 and 12 patentably distinguish over Loose.

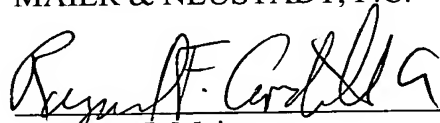
Moreover, with respect to Claims 8-11 that depend from independent Claims 1 and 4, Applicants respectfully submit that the further cited Tsuji reference does not cure the above noted deficiencies of Loose.

Thus, Applicant respectfully submits that Claim 1 and similarly independent Claims 4 and 12 and claims depending therefrom patentably distinguish over Loose and Tsuji considered individually or in combination. Thus, it is respectfully submitted that the rejection of Claims 1-7 and 12 as being anticipated by Loose should be withdrawn as should the rejection of Claims 8-11 as being unpatentable over Loose in view of Tsuji.

Consequently, in light of the above discussion and in view of the present amendment, the application is believed to be in condition for formal allowance. An early and favorable action to that effect is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

OBLON, SPIVAK, McCLELLAND,
MAIER & NEUSTADT, P.C.



Gregory J. Maier
Attorney of Record
Registration No. 25,599

Customer Number
22850

Tel: (703) 413-3000
Fax: (703) 413 -2220
(OSMMN 06/04)

Raymond F. Cardillo, Jr.
Registration No. 40,440